

ANC2F Community Development Committee Meeting  
August 23, 2006 – 7:00 p.m.  
Washington Plaza Hotel

In Attendance:

Chris Dyer, Chairman  
Helen Kramer, At-Large  
Samuel Robfogel, 2F01  
Kara McCabe, 2F01  
Jim Cook, 2F02  
Jim Richardson, 2F02  
Bob Ellison, 2F04  
Mike Shaeffer, 2F05  
Mike Bernardo, 2F06  
Jim Loucks, 2F06

Absent:

Ryan McGuinness, 2F03  
Hank Tomlinson, 2F05

Chris Dyer, Chairman, called the meeting to order and noted that a quorum was present.

**Approval of the Agenda**

The agenda was unanimously adopted.

**1440 Rhode Island Avenue, BZA Approval**

This address is the Braxton hotel and there was discussion about whether or not the ANC should support modifications to the hotel.

The first speaker, Steve Rigelsky, stated that representatives from the Braxton hotel had met before the ANC earlier this year regarding the Braxton. Their intention is to have the hotel become an historical landmark. He noted that essentially they are presenting the same information they presented back in April. Mr. Rigelsky noted that the hearing is set for October 17<sup>th</sup>. He then introduced the architect, Eric Colbert, who gave a three-pronged argument as to why the ANC should support the variances to the Braxton hotel.

The architect, Eric Colbert, stated: “The practical difficulty was that the Braxton is not in a historical district. Even though we were working on the project for three years, it is the Historic Preservation Board’s responsibility to come to you (the CDC). They did not do this. We felt there was due diligence. This is a very awkward situation because of the last-minute designation. We had to rush around at the last minute to achieve the full value. The constraints are significant. The Historical Society says there’s a practical difficulty involved in adjusting the size. There is a practical difficulty in providing for parking. It is not possible to maintain the façade to maintain the historic landmark status. Jim Kane and others questioned and debated as to how this will be established, and whether the building actually is qualified to have historical landmark status.”

Eric Colbert said there were plans for a 10 story condo building at the Braxton site. He noted he had met with neighbors, some board members, and some apartment association people and they all wanted condos. He stated his company has done several historic preservations and was familiar with the process.

Nate Silverstein said his property was adjacent to the Braxton hotel and he wasn't going to object to Mr. Colbert's application. In fact, he stated he was not really clear as to what was being requested and reminded people that since his property was adjacent to the hotel, he would be most affected by the expansion. He invited Board member to inspect his property to see how the Braxton renovation will impact on his property.

Architect Colbert commented: “The only increase in the footprint will be around the southwest alley – I do believe that’s not real close to your property. I spoke with you and said we would be willing to come and meet with you to answer your questions.

Chairman Dyer requested that a motion be made to approve the variances that the Braxton is asking for because the developer proved that the requests satisfied the requirements for a variance because they demonstrated there was a unique design that posed practical difficulties and that there would be no harm to the zoning or neighborhood.

The motion was introduced, seconded and passed by a vote of 10-0-0.

### **1350 R Street, NW - HPRB Massing and Concept Approval**

Jeffrey Schonberger made a presentation about work that will be done on the Union Mission Building and asked that the ANC sent a letter to HPRB approving massing and concept. He noted because there are existing buildings involved, it is a very complex project and is a very constrained site. The site includes the Central Union Mission building located at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and R. The ground floor has changed, in that the first floor windows are now smaller. This building originally was constructed in 1911 as the Studebaker Building and was initially used as a car dealer showroom. He noted that some of the site has actually been renovated. They are proposing to add a rear addition of about 17,000 square feet. The entire renovation would be about 55,000 square feet. The challenge is how to add to the space and not have it to be overwhelming. The limestone building will have the façade restored and the tall windows on the first floor will be restored to their original size. They also hope to restore the original storefront with a transom window. They want to consolidate the two penthouses into one. They'll restore the original brick bays and the decorative brickwork. There is a top floor which is set back, anywhere from 20 to 40 feet, from the street. They are concerned that if the building on the corner is not constructed, they will need a stronger vertical element to their building.

The first floor will be retail and the top will be residential. We're not sure how much residential – maybe the low 30's in square footage. There will be parking – a level of parking. The existing building has a basement below it and we are hoping to make that basement into a parking garage for about 30 to 35 cars. The access to the garage will be through the alley."

The Chairman stated: "It's a marvelous project and should be approved. I'd like to make a motion to the ANC to advise the HPRB to approve the massing and concept of 1350 R Street because it is not incompatible with the historical standards."

The motion was moved, seconded and passed by a vote of 10-0-0.

### **Alley Between Church Street and Q Street – Public Space Permit**

The Chairman then calls the meeting back to order. "The matter before us is a public space permit to close an alley to repair a sewer line. Monarch Construction will make the presentation. In a normal course of events, the CDC gets to review the matter. In this case, DDOT did not go through the normal channels thru the ANC and the CDC and that is why we are reviewing this now.

Monarc reported that there is a sewer line near the Lofts project. Going back to 2003, at the start of the Lofts project, and as a pre-condition of the building permit, D.C required that the sewer be lined with an epoxy lining so that when the renovation commences, the lining will be helpful to the sewer lining. Because the pipes are not uniform in their diameter, a big fold developed in the epoxy lining. From D.C.'s perspective, they wanted a clean pipeline for the next 100 years. It's impossible to remove the lining but we can remove the pipe and thus remove the big fold. The big fold is toward 14<sup>th</sup> Street and there is a section which goes to the middle manhole. There's an additional section which needs to be removed. The work involves replacement of the 12 foot sewer line -- and it's a tight area – so it will be a slow process in part because of the tightness of the area. From the western end, work will be conducted on the area downward, exposing and removing the existing pipe in 20 foot increments. There will be temporary patches in place and then steel plates will be put down. The 14<sup>th</sup> Street side will be open at all sides, with the indication that there is construction going on mid-block. A flagman will be at 15<sup>th</sup> Street to accommodate traffic flow. As you can imagine, where the construction is going, the excavation will limit traffic for one or two days. There will be sewer usage during the excavation period. The work will take two to three weeks, depending upon the weather, etc. Garbage pickup is a

concern. The D.C. trash pickup sometimes bypasses trash pickup if there is construction work going on. We'll take steps to continue all D.C. government trash pickup."

The committee and the public raised concerns about Monarc providing parking for individuals who were displaced and it was agreed that Monarc would make arrangements for temporary parking. There was also a question raised about how residents would be notified about the progress of work. There were concerns that the length of the permit was too long.

Dan Martini of 1422 Q Street asked about how this repaving would solve the problem that the alley is sinking. Kramer suggested that we need to contact the Building and Land Administration Agency to do an inspection and to determine who is responsible for repairing the alley.

Chairman Dyer moved that the CDC conditionally recommend to the ANC approval of this permit, that it last only two months and have only partial closure of the alley, and that Monarch present in writing at the next ANC meeting an effective trash management plan, a communication plan and a parking plan to the ANC by September 6th.

The motion passed and the Chairman added: "So that solves the traffic issue. We will see you in a couple of weeks."

Dyer moved that the ANC send a letter to DDOT to conduct an inspection of the alley after the repaving is complete to ensure that the alley will no longer sink and that a determination will be made who was responsible if any permanent damage has been made to the alley as a result of the construction.

Helen Kramer seconded the motion. The motion passes.

Meeting adjourned